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SUBJECT: GOMA NOTES - NAIROBI PROCESS: 17th MEETING OF JMG TASK FORCE, APRIL 11, 2008

¶1. (SBU) Summary: A smiling Vice Admiral Didier Etumba dropped into the Joint Monitoring Group (JMG) Task Force April 11, and fast bumped heads with Rwandan delegates about the FARDC's "scenarios" for ridding the country of FDLR. None of this impeded Etumba's briefing or dampened its cordiality. The Rwandans later renewed their complaint that the Task Force still had nothing to show for four months of work. They bickered over how to create a useful role for the body and how to get timely replies from the JMG Envoys. The Congo's acting chief delegate counseled patience. Rwanda demanded action and said it may investigate reported contacts between FDLR units and DRRR liaison officers in Lubero territory, among other issues. Task force members will visit a DRRR facility in Goma for their meeting on April 18. End summary.

Rwanda pushes for answers

¶2. (SBU) Vice Admiral Didier Etumba, co-chairman of the Goma process Joint Technical Commission on Peace and Security, replayed for the April 11 Joint Monitoring Group Task Force meeting a briefing he had presented earlier in the day to NGOs and humanitarian agencies at OCHA headquarters in Goma. Etumba devoted most of his comments to the theme of refugees and the return of populations to their homelands, and confirmed that FDLR must leave.

¶3. (SBU) Etumba outlined four "explicit" and two "implicit" missions of the Amani Program: four military activities including disengagement of forces, brassage, demobilization and reinsertion; and humanitarian programs for returning displaced Congolese to their home areas and repatriating Congolese refugees from neighboring countries. Corollary activity to revive government authority, renew the justice system and reinstate effective police presence complement the six missions.

¶4. (SBU) The second-ranking Rwandan delegate, Jean Damascene Rudasingwa, a one-time acquaintance to whom Etumba had addressed most of his remarks, politely acknowledged the speech but said that his government was less certain than ever what military operations the Congolese were planning. Citing the low-level participation in the Task Force, Etumba refused to divulge "defense secrets" and said only that his forces would act in due time. Citing the high level of their sources, Rwanda's delegates withheld what they knew about talks in Kigali that followed contacts between Amani Program leaders and Nkunda on April 7.

¶5. (SBU) Rudasingwa especially wondered why Colonel Augustin Mamba, the regular chief of the DRC delegation who was absent at the special envoys summit in the U.S., had decided to return via Rome. Congo's acting chief delegate, Major Ambroise Nanga, answered that military operations are jointly run but of course involve defense

secrets. He guessed that Mamba's Rome visit involved contacts with

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the Community of Sant'Egidio.

¶6. (SBU) Rudasingwa returned to FDLR's status, asking if there were any form in which they would be allowed to remain in the Congo. Etumba repeated that even if FDLR did not leave, it could be made inoperative and absolutely would not continue its criminal activities. Dr. Kara of the Amani Program interjected that the Nairobi communique is clear, that FDLR has to go whether they like it or not.

Looking to reform

¶7. (SBU) After Etumba withdrew, Rwanda's delegation monopolized the balance of the meeting agenda, using questions for discussion and new business as platforms for grievance. Rwanda may ask for investigation into reported contacts between FDLR units and DDRRR liaison officers in Lubero territory.

¶8. (SBU) The Rwandan attitude irritated the Congolese delegation but stimulated a debate among members on how to make the Task Force more relevant. Members agreed that low-risk field trips may be worthwhile but that it should organize meetings and presentations in the conference room itself, looking for ways to improve specific parts of the action plan spelled out in the Terms of Engagement. Some examples: sensitizing populations; cutting down time spent by ex-combatants in DDRRR centers.

¶9. (SBU) Because the JMG Envoys have not replied to any TF requests to date, the members declined to send any new requests and decided unanimously to re-send all requests as a bundle from Kinshasa, asking for immediate instructions

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¶10. (SBU) As the Envoys meetings in New York will be out of synch with the TF's schedule on April 18, members will meet briefly on that day only to sign minutes, then move to a DDRRR location in Goma town for a special presentation.

Comment

¶11. (SBU) As this and previous messages have demonstrated, regular dialogue with the JMG Envoys will be critical to ensuring that the Task Force develops into a useful and productive forum. We are hopeful that the New York meetings will establish the channels necessary to implement this. End comment.

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